

Testimony of Ron Bibler

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I'm Ron Bibler from Great falls. I speak to you today as an individual who benefits from the MTAP program. I urge you to support it. As I begin to speak, it is obvious there's something different about me. What it is actually is the fact that I'm deqaf. I wear hearing aids that help me monitor my own voice, but I hear by lip-reading.

Anyway, today's technology really helps to level the playing field. For instance, since the 1970's we have had captioned television. But being able to utilize the telephone is fairly recent. Telephone relay is one of the programs that MTAP is responsible for. I can't begin to tell you how beneficial it is to me, my family, my friends, and my clients that I don't have to depend on others to make my phone calls.

At the end of the last legislative session, I couldn't answer the phone. Now I can. That's how fast technology changes. In 2004 Montana became one of the first 5 states to offer CapTel. We're quite progressive and proud of that fact. New York just started offering CapTel this month...three years after us. But what a difference CapTel and two-line CapTel make.

Now in my business, my clients can call me. This allows for a more natural and confident relationship. It's important to the nature of my business. I'm a CFP. I manage and invest my clients assets. It can be unsettling if you were unable to call the guy who handles your money. Now my clients know I'm just a phone call away (which is not necessarily a good thing!). Not only that, anyone can call me. My wife: Honey can you bring home some groceries. My kids: Dad - can I borrow the car when you get home. My friends: Ron, can you help us move this weekend...and so on.

So MTAP assists many people in gaining functional equivalency. From the elderly hard of hearing who just need an amplified phone, to the deaf who depend on sign language and utilize video relay, to people like me who choose CapTel as their phone of choice.

I urge you to please continue to support the MTAP program and this legislation. Thank you.